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ABSTRACT

The implications of the lessons learned through an evaluability assessment (EA) of the Title II Basic Skills Improvement Program (BSIP) for State Education Agency (SEA) support of model demonstration programs are discussed. The purposes, methodology and uses of the EA process are presented. Also included is a discussion of the details of the American Institute for Research in the Behavioral Sciences (AIR's) recent evaluability assessment of BSIP. The effect of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 on the program and on EA are considered. Those BSIP experiences in administering model demonstration programs which are applicable to state program managers and policymakers are described. (Author/GK)

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EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT OF THE TITLE II BASIC SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS FOR STATE-LEVEL PROGRAMS

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EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT OF THE TITLE II BASIC SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM: IMPLICATIONS FOR STATE-LEVEL PROGRAMS

This paper discusses the implications of the lessons learned through an evaluability assessment (EA) of the Title II Basic Skills Improvement Program (BSIP) for SEA support of model demonstration programs.

The purposes, methodology and uses of the EA process will be presented, followed by a discussion of the details of AIR's recent evaluability assessment of BSIP. The effect of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 on the program and on the EA will also be discussed. Finally, we will describe those BSIP experiences in administering model demonstration programs which are applicable to state program managers, and policymakers.

The Evaluability Assessment Process

This evaluability assessment of the Title II Basic Skills Improvement Program was conducted under an umbrella contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Division of Performance Management Systems. The BSIP EA was one of nine evaluability assessments of discretionary programs conducted by the American Institutes for Research from 1980 to 1982.

Evaluability assessment is a management tool used to provide administrators with immediately useful information on the effectiveness of their programs. The EA technique can be used to determine the extent to which a program is ready for impact evaluation. It helps formulate the information on which such an evaluation should be based. The process can also be employed to help plan new programs or modify existing ones in response to changes in goals or funding.

An evaluability assessment is generally a five-stage process. The five stages serve to answer the following questions:

What is the program supposed to look like?

Through a series of interviews with program management and policymakers (where appropriate), and a review of internal and external program documents, the assessment team (composed of AIR staff and Task Officers from the Divison of Performance Management Systems) develop a description of the program. The program description, as well as all other project products are reviewed immediately with program management and staff for accuracy. Several types of descriptive program models are then developed which depict:

- the intended logic of the program; and
- the activities and processes used to carry out this logic.

The program description and the logic models document the extent to which agreed-upon program objectives, measures, and measurement systems are in place, and the extent of agreement or disagreement among the different perspectives represented in the models. These products can also serve as a starting point for planning discussions, and later serve as valuable tools with which to explain the program to service providers, constituents, and policymakers.

What does the program actually underway look like?

In this phase, project staff compare the description of the intended program with the way the program actually operates. In order to obtain an accurate understanding of activities in the field, staff conduct site visits to a number of program grantees and contractors. While on site, interviews are conducted with grant administrators and service providers, and documentation describing project goals and activities is collected. In addition to providing a clear picture of grantee activities, site visits are used to:

- determine the type and availability of grantee performance data;
- assess the measurability of federal program objectives at the site level;
- obtain project staff views on the feasibility of the federal strategy for success; and
- identify discrepancies between the intended program and the actual program.

This site specific information is used to generate function models depicting the flow of activities, information and resources which result from the federal program. Project staff then develop function models showing the actuality of the entire program, including the activities and interactions of the federal office, federal contractors, and the grantees.

Which objectives are plausible given the program as it is currently operating?

Based on all the information gathered, and models developed to that point, the plausibility of each previously defined program objective is assessed. The discrepancies identified in the previous stage are examined to determine whether or not it is reasonable to expect that the program will accomplish its objectives.

The conditions that affect a program's successfully attaining its objectives include resources, activities, and many other variables capable of affecting the quality of program performance. To say that an objective is plausible is to

claim that if the program continues to operate as it does at present, the objective will be realized. To say that an objective is implausible is to assert that, for various reasons, present program operations will not support the attainment of that objective. These reasons include such factors as insufficient fiscal resources, legislative changes, or activities that are not occurring as planned.

What are possible measures or indicators of program performance?

The plausibility information is then used to develop a model identifying performance measures which can assess progress toward accomplishing the objectives. Potential data sources that can provide the measurement information are also identified. If resources were infinite, a complete evaluation would be able to assess every activity and outcome. As resources are limited, only those program components of most importance (to program administrators and staff) are measured.

The preliminary versions of the measurement models are reviewed by the project Work Group as part of a "winnowing" process. The models are examined for their utility and accuracy, and those events which are of the highest priority for evaluation are identified.

What management and evaluation options can be undertaken for program improvement?

Finally, assessment staff recommend a series of specific management options that the program can use to improve its functioning. Reviewed by program staff, whos comments are incorporated, these options often propose strategies to reduce or eliminate the discrepancies identified earlier. Other options address ways in which administrators can demonstrate that their program is making measurable progress toward achieving its objectives.

Basic Skills Improvement under Title II

Title II ESEA was designed as a discretionary grants program to assist states and local school districts in improving achievement in four basic skills: reading, mathematics, and oral and written communication. Effective in 1979, with a 1980 appropriation of $28 million, Title II incorporated many of the provisions of the former National Reading Improvement Act (1975-1979) with new programmatic concepts: improved coordination of basic skills programs and resources, and the development of model demonstration projects for eventual replication in other sites. Part A of the legislation envisioned that demonstration projects

would serve to operationalize research in the basic skills by designing and implementing instructional programs that could be duplicated by other programs. Under Part B, Congress intended that coordination of the basic skills improvement efforts would occur through the development and implementation of comprehensive state plans.

Title II provided for three separate programs of support in the basic skills:

- Part A, National Basic Skills Improvement Program;
- Part B, State Basic Skills Improvement Program; and
- Part C, an Inexpensive Book Distribution Program and a Special Mathematics Program.

The National Basic Skills Improvement Program provided for the federal government to make grants or contracts to state education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), and public and private nonprofit agencies, organizations, and institutions, including institutions of higher education. These grants were for planning, research, development, and demonstration programs in reading, mathematics, and oral and written communication. Four types of grants could be supported:

- basic skills improvement programs in schools;
- parent and volunteer participation in basic skills instruction;
- basic skills improvement programs operating outside of schools for youths and adults; and
- uses of television and radio programming in basic skills improvement.

Part A also authorized the federal government to provide information and technical assistance to grantees, and to collect and disseminate information concerning grants which have been successful in improving the achievement of students in the basic skills.

Title II funding provisions specified that the first $20 million appropriated for both Parts A and B be used to support the grant activities of Part A.

The State Basic Skills Improvement Program (Part B) was targeted for SEAs, which could receive funds under a State Formula Grants Program allocation using a formula based on school age population, with a $50,000 minimum. SEAs were required to submit a comprehensive state basic skills plan to the federal government, which served as the basis for an agreement negotiated with the SEA. Under the Part B State Leadership Program, each SEA could also apply for discretionary grants to support leadership and training activities designed to prepare personnel to implement proven effective basic skills instructional programs.

The evaluability assessment concentrated on the Parts A and B grant activities, the contracts supporting program development, validation and dissemination, and the work of the Steering Committee. This evaluability assessment did not address the operation of the Part C programs; it touched on the BSIP special initiative activities only as they operated to support the Part A and B grant programs.

Actual BSIP Operations

The Basic Skills Improvement Program developed a complex strategy in order to achieve its major objective of improving basic skills achievment in children, youth, and adults. This strategy became operational in an incremental manner over the life of the program.

BSIP was intended to operate for four years, beginning in FY80. The program started up immediately upon passage of the legislation in the fall of 1979 with little time for program development and strategy planning. Parts A and B grants had to be awarded quickly. The result of this haste was that not all of the program components operating in 1981 were functional at the time of the Parts A and B grant awards. Putting the program into place took time and BSIP as it existed in FY81 was not the same program that was operating in FY80. This led to several operational problems. For example:

- Part A grant awards were made to some projects which did not fully understand or were not fully committed to the concept of demonstration program development. Some grantees had participated in the earlier Right-to-Read program and assumed BSIP was a continuation of this service delivery strategy;
- BSIP was not able to formulate and circulate operational definitions of what was meant by a demonstration program and improved coordination of basic skills programs and resources, so that as a result, there was ambiguity in the field related to these concepts;
- SEAs were allowed to submit draft plans or plans to plan, rather than comprehensive statewide basic skills improvement plans, and awards were made on this basis; and
- Although BSIP knew it wanted to institute a technical assistance support strategy operating through external contractors, this strategy could not be carefully thought through before grant awards to Parts A and B recipients were made.

Since the immediate priority was on "getting the program up and running," there was some "slippage" in planning. The BSIP staff agreed, however, that in 1981 the program was fully functional and that grantees were exhibiting a more thorough understanding of its intended outcomes and eventual impacts.

A second environmental influence also existed which curtailed the extent to which BSIP could realize its intermediate outcomes and projected long-range outcomes. Title II of ESEA of 1978 was consolidated into the state block grant programs under the Educational Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981. FY82 is the last year of federal BSIP operation. Since the Parts A and B programs were planned to achieve their objectives over a four-year period (until FY84), the program will not operate to its intended completion. This means that Part A projects are not as certain to achieve demonstration status, nor are SEA Part B grantees liable to complete the implementation of their comprehensive basic skills plans. Finally, the fact that BSIP is soon to cease operations greatly constrains the management and evaluation options which the program might wish to consider and undertake. The program will never confront a second round of grant applications and awards, and the potential audience for evaluation information within the U.S. Department of Education is much smaller.

Plausibility of BSIP Objectives

With these realities in mind then, we assessed the plausibility of the Basic Skills Improvement Program achieving any of its intended outcomes. Plausibility is defined as an assessment of the presence and operation of sufficient conditions to support the successful attainment of objectives. In other words, "If the program continues to operate as it does presently, what is the likelihood it will achieve its objectives?"

Three of the five Part A outcomes were judged to be plausible. That is, they would be attained if the program continued to operate until FY84 as it did in 1981. Part A grantees were implementing comprehensive basic skills programs, and appropriately involving parents and the private sector in basic skills instruction in and out of schools. The Part A program outcome of developing model demonstration programs for evaluation replication in other sites is, however, in some jeopardy. It is certain that some Part A grantee projects will become demonstrations, either at the national level through the Joint Dissemination Review Panel, at the state level through IV-D programs, or at the local level through more informal spread to neighboring districts or schools. However, it is probable that not all grantees will achieve some form of demonstration status.

This questionable plausibility stems from the BSIP context at the time of its initiation. The BSIP program was an ambitious undertaking, coming on the heels of the National Reading Improvement Act. Many grant applicants to BSIP had been involved in Right-to-Read and did not fully understand the important differences between a service delivery program and a demonstration program.

BSIP grant solicitation and award procedures were thought to be insufficiently defined and explicit in this regard to ensure that applicants understood this change in intent. The result was that some grants were awarded to projects that either had little understanding or commitment to the demonstration concept.

Also, during the first year of the program, BSIP had to formulate its criteria for demonstration programming. This, too, took time to communicate to grantees, with the result that grantees only later decided on whether to adopt some form of demonstration status, or none at all.

The remaining Part A program outcome, increased coordination of federal, state, and local basic skills programs and resources, is unlikely to be realized at all. This objective is not perceived as important to Part A grantees, and BSIP is not likely to be able to intervene to correct this perception.

There were three Part B outcomes, one of which was judged to be plausible. There is strong evidence to suggest that SEAs are coordinating federal and state programs supporting basic skills instruction, and that the type and extent of this coordination increased as a result of BSIP support. There is also reason to believe that should more funds be appropriated for this Part B program (which will not occur), coordination achievements would continue to increase.

The outcome related to the implementation of comprehensive statewide basic skills plans is limited by the fact that in FY80, some states submitted only a draft plan or plan-to-plan. BSIP could require plan updates only every three years, and so had no formal vehicle for encouraging SEAs to develop the more comprehensive plan.

Finally, the likelihood of SEAs supporting the development of LEA model demonstration projects through their subgrants is unlikely. Most states did not distribute their subgrant funds to LEAs with this outcome in mind. In many instances, the funds available for subgrant support were too small to enable an LEA to implement a comprehensive project to achieve demonstration status. There was also ambiguity in the Title II legislation regarding the necessity of subgrant model program development, although BSIP did adopt the objective.

Parts A and B grantees did receive information, training, and technical assistance seen as useful in developing demonstration programs and basic skills products. Those projects wishing to become validated through JDRP received such assistance. Many products developed through BSIP contracts related to basic skills improvement were completed.

The one outcome whose attainment is questionable is that of marketing basic skills products to commercial publishers, to be accomplished through a BSIP

contract. By late 1981 few nominations of such products had been received. Out of the initial target of 20 products, only 10 nominations were made.

It should be noted that much responsibility for the attainment of these objectives was carried by the support contracts administered by BSIP. BSIP staff were involved through the review and monitoring activities as much as possible, but limited staff and travel funds made on-site monitoring and technical assistance by BSIP staff difficult. The staff also believed that "long-distance" reviews through annual reports and telephone conversations were relatively ineffective.

The crucial threat to the overall plausibility of the BSIP is the fact that the program has become a part of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 and will not operate for four years as planned. Parts A and B grantees had anticipated a four-year period during which they would develop model demonstration programs and the improved coordination of basic skills programs and resources. Truncating this timeframe to two years seriously jeopardizes the program's overall success. A second limitation to success is the current level of funding, which has curtailed Part A grantee activities, and limited SEAs in developing and implementing comprehensive basic skills plans.

However, BSIP will have evidence of success in several respects. There are likely to be a few Part A grantees that achieve some form of demonstration status on a national, state, or local level. And there will be evidence that SEAs have improved the coordination of basic skills programs within their states. There is also likely to be evidence to suggest that the BSIP support contractor strategy has facilitated these two outcomes, and has proven effective.

Management and Evaluation Options

The final step of this evaluability assessment was to identify likely uses of program performance information, and to develop management and evaluation options which took into account the effects of ECIA on the program. Were BSIP to operate for the next two years as anticipated, or have the opportunity of soliciting and making new Parts A and B grant awards, there would have been much to say concerning options for improving BSIP performance. Given the few remaining months of BSIP operations, there was little purpose in concentrating on those program events where no management interventions could be made, such as strategy development and grant awards. Instead, the information gained relating to these aspects of BSIP was used to develop a discussion of how SEAs might successfully support demonstration programming.

The more likely uses of program performance information for BSIP at that point in time included: identifying and describing the progress and success of

BSIP from FY80 until the present, strengthening and targeting technical assistance efforts for FY82, developing lessons learned from the BSIP for SEAs and LEAs, and attempting to institutionalize the Parts A and B program concepts within states in the hopes that the projects can continue. Even within the context of its final year of operation, then, there were management activities (or management options) and information collection, analysis and use mechanisms (evaluation options) which BSIP was advised to undertake.

Management Options. Possible approaches which BSIP could take included:

1. Issue BSIP policy statements clarifying the three or more levels of demonstration success to ensure that misperceptions on the part of Part A grantees have been clarified.
2. Develop information packets for Part A grantees detailing federal, state, and local validation programs, the criteria for each, and potential funds available to support their continued operation.
3. Ensure the completion and nationwide distribution of the special initiatives products on basic skills instruction improvement.
4. Redirect the dissemination contractor to deliver technical assistance to Parts A and B grantees in product development, even if the eventual outcome is not commercial publication.
5. Facilitate the development or strengthening of state basic skills networks comprised of the current State Basic Skills Coordinator, the Part B subgrantees within each state, the Part A grantees within each state, and SEA administrators responsible for validation programs. This might also encompass involving the State Basic Skills Coordinator with BSIP staff and support contractors in technical assistance delivery to Part A grantees in each state.

   If possible, a national meeting or series of regional meetings should be held to encourage this network development.
6. Provide a mechanism to facilitate Part B grantees' sharing of the products developed through BSIP participation and information about the instances of successful statewide coordination that have occurred.
7. Encourage support contractors to work more closely with Part A grantees. Encourage joint (Contractor/Part A grantee) participation in regionally-sponsored events.
8. Consider curtailing the expenditure of S&E funds for individual on-site project visits and use these monies to support state network-building and other technical assistance activities.

Evaluation Options. Options for improved program performance also include data collection, analysis and data use alternatives. Collecting, analyzing, or summarizing some key data would assist BSIP in telling the story of its implementation, progress, and success to date, and provide valuable lessons learned for the U.S. Department of Education and SEAs under ECIA.

1. Analyze all information currently available from grantee proposals, annual reports, BSIP staff reviews, and support contractors to: identify the number and type of Part A grantees presently committed to some level of demonstration program status, and instances and effects of SEA success in coordinating basic skills programs and resources.

2. Consider filling information gaps through low-cost surveys of Parts A and B grantees to capture instances of success in both programs, including: data on improved delivery of basic skills instruction, instances of coordination success, support contractor sources, influence on grantee programs.

3. Consider modifying grantee program evaluation requirements for FY82 to collect the necessary information on project status and projected success.

4. From this information, publish lessons-learned documents on demonstration program development, successful state coordination of basic skills programs and resources, and the design and delivery of technical assistance to basic skills grantees.

5. Continue to sponsor the Kirschner and Associates evaluation and redirect its scope of work to collect additional information if necessary and to analyze and present the information available on Parts A and B grantees.

These management and evaluation options, if exercised, would contribute to BSIP's capacity to:

- target its internal technical assistance efforts through BSIP staff and its external assistance through the support contractors to assist Part A grantees in refining their operations toward some level of demonstration status, and in planning for a continuation of support through SEA-sponsored basic skills programs under ECIA;
- provide a knowledge base for SEAs to use in designing ECIA basic skills programs using demonstration program and coordination strategies; and
- document the success of BSIP in FY80 and FY81.

Basic Skills Improvement Under ECIA

ECIA Chapter 2, Subchapter A - Basic Skills Development is a direct parallel to Title II of ESEA. Section 571 states that:

> Funds allocated for use under this subchapter shall be used by state and local educational agencies to develop and implement a comprehensive and coordinated program designed to improve elementary and secondary school instruction in the basic skills of reading, mathematics, and written and oral communication, as formerly authorized by Title II

of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, relating to basic skills improvement, including the special mathematics program as formerly authorized by Section 222 of such title.

The basic skills are defined as they were in Title II: reading, mathematics, and written and oral communication. The requirement of comprehensive and coordinated programs at the state and LEA levels remains.

Section 572 reports that states may use the 20 percent of Subchapter A funds reserved for state programs to fund grants and contracts which:

1. carry out planning, research and development, demonstration projects, training of leadership personnel, short term and regular session teacher training institutes; and
2. develop instructional materials, disseminate information, and provide technical assistance to local educational agencies.

This decision must be made by a State Advisory Council after ECIA funds have been allocated across Chapters 1, 2, and 3. In addition, under Section 573, LEAs may elect to sponsor demonstration and training programs for parents using their Subchapter A allocations.

There will, of course, be competing priorities for these Subchapter A funds. However, many states are presently involved in demonstration programming. It is likely that given the encouragement of Subchapter A, these goals will continue at the state level. States may adopt long-range objectives similar to those under BSIP:

- Increase knowledge of effective basic skills instruction;
- Disseminate and replicate demonstration programs in effective basic skills instruction;
- Coordinate basic skills instructional programs at state and local levels; and
- Increase commitment to improving basic skills instruction.

If states adopt a demonstration strategy, it may be one similar to the Title II Part A Program, with the exception that demonstration projects will probably concentrate on in-school basic skills improvement and parent participation. Also, as less funds will be available, fewer demonstration projects may be supported.

SEA Sponsored Demonstration Programs under ECIA

We expect that if states undertake a demonstration strategy as part of their efforts to improve basic skills instruction, they may well adopt objectives similar to those of Part A programs under Title II:

- Implement a comprehensive basic skills program in one site;
- Improve basic skills instruction in that site;
- Develop model demonstration programs;
- Disseminate and replicate these models in other sites.

As noted previously, states will have less money under ECIA than was available to BSIP under Title II to support demonstration program development. These programs will concentrate on in-school and parent participation in basic skills improvement. States may, however, decide that demonstration program development will require: multiple years of support; SEA monitoring and technical assistance; and certification by some set of criteria as a valid demonstration before dissemination and replication efforts are supported.

To this extent, the BSIP experience is applicable. We extrapolated a set of recommendations for SEAs from our findings concerning the planning, initiation, monitoring and technical assistance, and dissemination and replication of demonstration programs. Our recommendations are presented graphically in Appendix 1 at the end of this paper. The text that follows presents the rationale for each stage of demonstration program development, based on the BSIP experience.

We learned that the process of administering model demonstration programs may be separated into several stages:

- Planning: is the process of defining what the term "demonstration" means, and setting goals and developing strategies to implement that concept. This process also includes developing procedures for program operations, organizing and coordinating necessary resources, and determining ways to assess outcomes.
- Initiation: is the process of awarding a predetermined number of grants to model projects which will demonstrate the concepts defined in the first stage.
- Monitoring and evaluation: is a process of defining and collecting information concerning the grantee projects' success. Evaluation information is used to improve project implementation or to demonstrate impact.
- Dissemination: is the process of communicating information about successful practices, offering choices among successful practices and assisting others in the implementation and replication of these practices.
- Replication: is the process of transferring successful practices from the original project developers to other situations, populations, and locations.

Planning a Demonstration Program

We learned that planning a demonstration grant program is a complex task. First, the term "demonstration" itself must be defined. The most commonly held

definition at the federal level is "the conduct of innovative education practices with the intent of evaluating them in operational settings." On the basis of assessments of these models, those that prove exemplary are disseminated and used in additional sites, thereby expanding services to more participants. Such demonstrations are best understood as small scale field experiments undertaken for a finite period of time to test the desirability of a proposed course of action.

Using this definition, a concept has demonstration potential only if it is currently operational, and is understood to be innovative and potentially effective. The instructional ideas are often the product of previous research and development that became demonstration projects: they are not new and untried. If untried ideas are used as the basis for demonstration projects, one can expect that even after years of funding quite a number of the projects are "not going to pan out."

In planning also, states will probably find it important to determine what criteria will be used to assess the success of the demonstration programs. The Joint Dissemination Review Panel (JDRP) and most state-sponsored demonstration development programs under the present Title IV-C have adopted these simple criteria, programs that are: educationally effective and exportable. Evidence of effectiveness often includes gains on standardized achievement tests or other qualitative data collected on reliable and valid instruments. Exportability is more subjective. Evidence from replication sites is used if available. Programs are required to submit information concerning population served, resources required and special conditions which affect the implementation of the program. Any program seeking credentials as a model demonstration program must provide resource specifications: how much and what kinds of resources must be committed to a project for start-up, training of staff, materials, facilities, contracted services, and travel.

A demonstration program is distinct from a service delivery program as it is assumed to be a "model." "Modeling" is conceptual, reflective, and descriptive, requiring objectivity and constant refinement based on reality testing. A potential danger that SEAs may find is that the pressing need to manage a service delivery program usurps time and attention from the "modeling" task. The result is that the model is weak, unspecified, or cannot be exported elsewhere, and still retain integrity and effectiveness. States will need, then, to direct greater attention to the modeling task within the program planning goal and to assist projects in adequately conceptualizing and specifying their

models. The potential for replication and the preconditions required for dissemination need to be integrated into initial model specifications.

Our experience at the federal level has been, however, that dissemination and replication considerations are dealt with at the conclusion of a sequence which begins with research, development, implementation, and evaluation. Concerns related to the disseminability or marketability of programs and materials are addressed when it is too late and often too costly to make any difference. Relatively simple concerns, such as estimates on what the market would bear for costs of materials, reusability of materials, format, packaging, and need for training, when considered early in program development, can substantially increase the utility or generalizability of the program. Similarly, early examination of what it takes to implement a model program elsewhere, such as staff development, administrative support, resources and materials, and requirements can result in easier program replication.

Finally, the range of talents in demonstration program staff tends to be concentrated in applied research, materials development, and perhaps training. Skills in dissemination planning, program packaging, marketing, or implementation support for replication are not found within the staff of most of these programs. Consequently, there is the need for program staff development in the areas of dissemination, replication, model-building, and implementation support to complement existing capabilities in service and management areas.

The concept of demonstration programming was new to most basic skills national program grantees, and BSIP planning efforts did not conform to the tenets of good demonstration program planning. The preceding Right to Read Program had been oriented primarily toward service delivery, not program demonstration. As many of the BSIP grantees also participated in the Right to Read Program, they did not fully understand or accept the change in priorities, or the resulting changes needed in project design and scope. These were projects which already had goals, client populations and established methodologies. Title II was viewed as a means of continuing and expanding work already begun.

This commonly held misconception was exacerbated by the lack of any clear definition of the term "demonstration." Demonstration was used to describe projects which simply provided services, as well as projects which might prove exemplary and warrant future dissemination.

The Program Office did provide some direction by adopting the objective of submitting 40 projects to JDRP for validation by 1984. This goal, however, was developed well after the grant definition and initiation stages, and was an unwelcome surprise for many grantees.

BSIP's lack of definition and focus is also evidenced by the many types of demonstration programs which were authorized within the National Programs Branch. BSIP funded numerous projects in three distinctly different interest areas:

- in-school projects were intended to demonstrate improved delivery of instructional services to children in the areas of reading, mathematics, and oral and written communication;
- parent participation projects were designed to enlist parents and volunteers in working with schools to improve the basic skills of children in their homes;
- out-of-school projects were targeted toward youth and adults and on instructional activities outside a school's normal curriculum.

Almost none of these many kinds of projects were based on previous research. Either they were new ideas, or they represented expansions of purely service delivery projects.

Based, then, on what is known about the planning of demonstration grants programs, and the BSIP recent experience, we recommend that SEAs adopting this strategy plan in the following manner:

- Decide on the basis of state education policy statements related to basic skills achievement, and local educational priorities, a contained sphere within which demonstration programs are to be developed. It seems unlikely that funds will be available to support a large number of demonstration programs at the elementary and secondary levels and concerning all basic skills areas. What the SEA must do is target its demonstration program priorities into areas, for example, such as elementary reading and writing, secondary oral and written communication, or programs involving parents in the instruction of basic skills.
- Determine what is meant by "demonstration," and make a distinction between trying new ideas and testing and verifying instructional strategies already in existence in a single site and having promise for larger audiences. The second alternative is probably preferable. Inherent in the definition of demonstration are the criteria which a program must meet to be certified as a model for widescale dissemination. SEAs are advised to provide for differing levels of demonstration status, including JDRP for a small, select number of projects, and relying more heavily on their present state validation criteria.
- Estimate the duration of funding required by projects to achieve demonstration status. This duration seems to be four years if demonstrations are beginning with new or untested ideas and three years if the project enters the sequence with an instructional strategy that is operational. Funding for later stages of program development should be made contingent on projects' successful completion of earlier stages.
- Estimate the level of funding support required by projects. It is important that SEAs recognize that demonstration programs require more funds than comparable service delivery programs.

Services must be delivered and more extensive evaluation and model building activities have to be supported as well. This means that fewer demonstration projects should be supported at more cost per project.

- Ensure that the development of programs achieving demonstration status is complemented by a statewide dissemination and replication strategy. That is, once programs are certified as exemplary, the benefit realized from other sites adopting and using these programs must be planned for and supported as well. Most states have found that money should be set aside for the program developers to assist other sites in replicating the program and that small seed monies need to be made available for adopting sites to introduce the program into their operations.

Initiating a Demonstration Program

Initiating the demonstration grants program is the most important stage after planning. The outcome of this stage is the award of grants to LEAs and other organizations showing the greatest likelihood of developing a truly exemplary program. BSIP had difficulty with this stage. They were unable to describe the components of a demonstration program sufficiently to elicit those grant applications having potential for achieving demonstration status. Consequently, BSIP awarded grants to many projects that either did not understand, or were not committed to the demonstration goal. Many of the proposals lacked adequate evaluation, model-building, and dissemination plans. Some had incomplete objectives. Still others made no attempt to base their proposal goals and objectives on a research base--they were requesting money to implement new and untested ideas. These deficiencies later thwarted the intent of the demonstration goal.

It is also evident that BSIP lacked sufficient funds to support all the activities associated with successful demonstration programming. Available money was spread too thin in an attempt to fund a large number of projects. While understandable, this ensured that grantees did not have enough funds to implement validation, dissemination, and replication activities.

While support contractors were funded to supply projects with "how-to" information on evaluation and validation, many projects, uncommitted to the demonstration goal remained unaware of and/or resistant to the assistance offered.

SEAs, then, will need to provide for numerous activities in order to successfully initiate a program to fund demonstration projects. These activities include: development of the grants application package, specifying the components of the grant review and award process, and selecting and orienting proposal reviewers.

In preparing the grants application package, SEAs should make the potential respondent aware of:

- The operational definition of a demonstration program and the criteria for achieving the various forms of demonstration status;
- The SEA priority areas for which demonstration programs are to be developed;
- A preference for sequenced development of the demonstration program, including: start-up and initial operations, full-scale implementation, refinement and preparation for model specification, certification as a demonstration program, and dissemination and replication. Proposals should be required to plan for these stages, and, therefore, timelines and milestones for the attainment of each stage must be specified.
- The expanded project evaluation plans required to support the development of a demonstration project, such as: documentation of project start-up and evolution, the record of the separate refinements of the "model" as apart from service delivery specification, the necessity of measurable objectives at each stage of program development, the requirement of documenting and assessing replicability at each stage, and the added information and reporting requirements from a project to the SEA to guide demonstration program development.
- The need to include staff experienced and competent in documenting and evaluating demonstration programs as opposed to those most competent in delivering services;
- The need to establish a research base that convinces others the innovation is worth testing as a basis for demonstration and dissemination;
- The dissemination and replication strategies adopted by the SEA to support demonstration program adoption by others;
- The monitoring, evaluation, and technical assistance that will be available from the SEA and that projects are expected to participate in throughout the developmental process.

Because demonstration program development is so distinct from service delivery, an SEA can expect that some interested grant applicants will still not fully understand the concept. To ensure that proposals address the demonstration goals, the SEA is advised to undertake two types of technical assistance. First, where possible, the SEA should schedule public meetings with potential grantees to answer questions and provide grant clarification. Second, the SEA should require the submission of a prospectus or pre-proposal, on which the SEA provides feedback and direction for refining the proposal concept prior to formal submission. Only after previously reviewed proposals are submitted, should the SEA proceed with a field review and grantee selection.

Selecting and orienting field reviewers can also be difficult. An SEA should configure external panels having experience and expertise in the state-

of-the-art of basic skills instruction; familiarity with the concept of demonstration program development; a notion of the marketability of concepts within the state and present state priorities in basic skills instruction; and program evaluation. These field reviewers will require a thorough orientation to the program's goals, objectives, and priorities. Where possible, reviewers should practice on example proposals and their inter-rater reliability should be monitored to ensure that all proposals will receive a consistent review.

Demonstration Program Monitoring, Technical Assistance, and Evaluation

Through the monitoring and evalution role, an agency seeks to maximize the likelihood that each grantee will achieve some type of demonstration status with a program that is replicable in other sites.

Lack of sufficient funding restricted the number of site visits that BSIP project monitors were able to make to grantees: some grantees were not visited at all, while a few received more than one visit. This meant that BSIP was often inadequately dependent on telephone conversations, and on reviewing final reports as a means of monitoring grantee progress.

An additional problem was the lack of preparation experienced by many projects in designing and implementing a timely evaluation. Quite often, projects were well under way before realizing the need to hire an evaluator to document their activities.

Based on the BSIP experience, SEAs are advised that:

- SEA monitoring must allow for one staff member to become responsible for all interactions with a particular site, and monies for staff to visit each site at least twice each year.
- Project evaluation requirements must be specified in advance and designed to provide SEA project officers with timely and relevant information from which to make service delivery and model-building modifications. Evaluation requirements should alter as a project progresses toward demonstration status.
- The SEA must have the option of curtailing or cancelling project support at each step in development if it appears that a project is unlikely to achieve some type of demonstration status, or if the project might prove difficult to replicate.
- Projects should be required to report progress twice each year.
- The SEA monitoring role must be supplemented by a technical assistance capacity, either within the agency or supported externally through a contract. If an external contract is chosen, there must be close coordination between the SEA and technical assistance contractor.
- Projects must be aware that such technical assistance exists, and that they should avail themselves of the service if the SEA monitor

suggests doing so. They should also be able to ask for technical assistance on their own initiative.

- This assistance should be delivered in several forms, including on-site consultation and group meetings of projects with common ideas or concerns.
- Allowing for the sequential development of programs, projects should be required to report evaluation data concerning: implementation progress; refinements to the model to be demonstrated; client progress; credible assessments of client change; evidence that the change was linked to participation in the program; the educational importance of the change; cost efficiency and effectiveness of the demonstration program; generalizability of the program to other sites and factors affecting replicability.

Demonstration Program
Dissemination and Replication

In the evaluability assessment of BSIP, the demonstration programs were not observed at a point in time when they were ready for widescale dissemination. However, in talking with BSIP staff and project site administrators, several recommendations became apparent that have consequence for SEAs operating such programs. The most important item is that dissemination must be considered a priority for all model projects, must be financially supported during the project's last year, and must be planned for from the beginning. Given this fact, SEAs are advised to:

- Require that each project develop an outline of a dissemination plan as part of its proposal. The plan should include:
  - kind and number of people to whom dissemination activities will be targeted;
  - method(s) by which such audiences will be made aware of the project and encouraged to observe it;
  - procedures for organizing and packaging project components and/or materials; and
  - anticipated products, such as handbooks of project procedures, evaluation manuals, and classroom materials.

Soon after grant award, project officers should work closely with grantees to "fill in" the above sections of the dissemination plan.

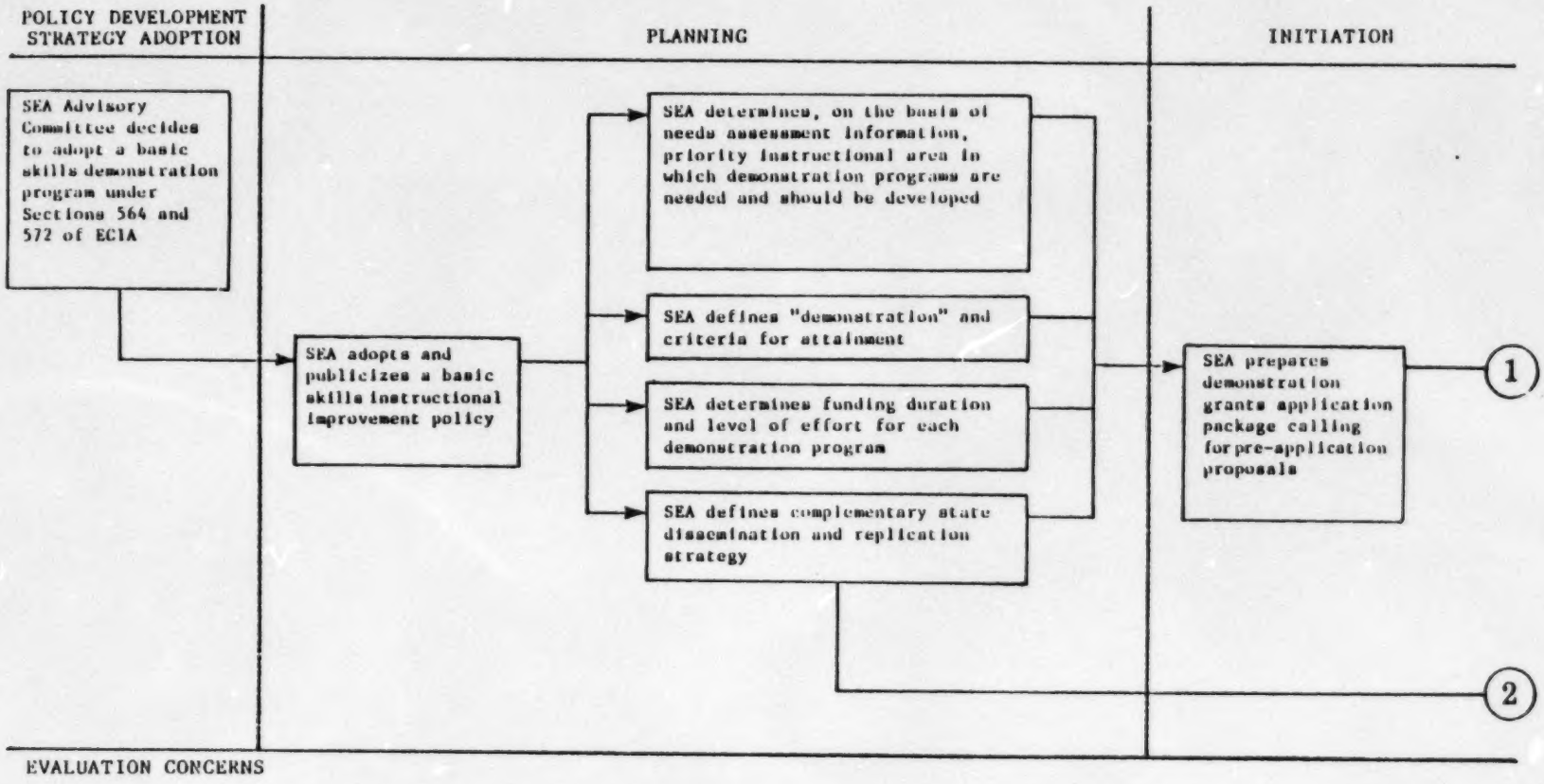
- Require that a certain percentage of funds be set aside by each project to support dissemination. Most of these funds will probably be used toward the end of the project when the final "push" for dissemiantion occurs.
- A suggested dissemination scenario operating throughout the project's lifetime might be:
  - Outlines of dissemination plans included in proposals;

- Immediately after funding, dissemination plans completed jointly by project officers and grantees;
- In the middle of the first year, the SEA disseminates outlines describing each project to other projects;
- At the end of the first year, the SEA disseminates detailed project descriptions statewide. These descriptions include information on:
  - project objectives
  - number and characteristics of participants
  - anticipated products;
- In the third year, project findings are reported by project staff, and disseminated by the SEA. Printed and audiovisual materials on projects' practices, inservice training, service delivery organization and implementation are packaged and distributed.

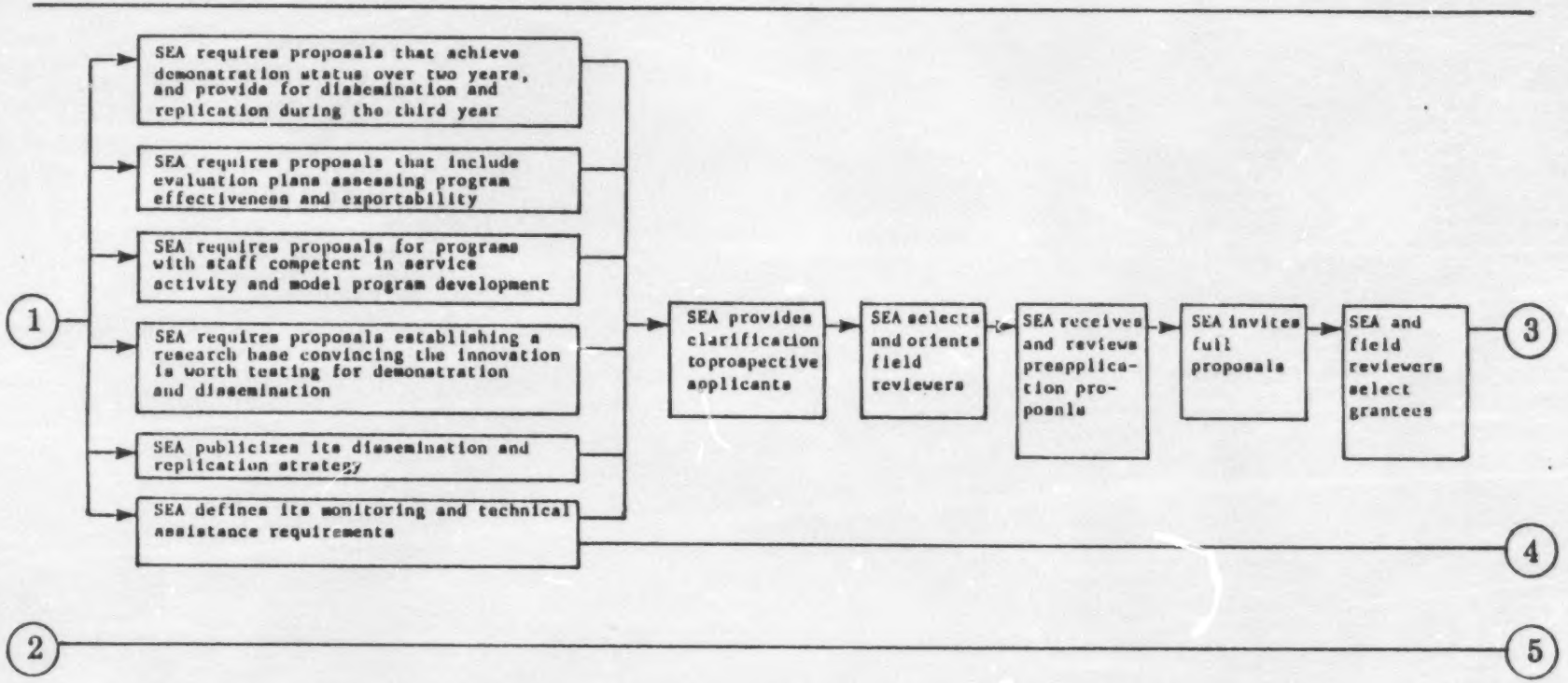
In reality, the concept of demonstration is not complete until the program has been spread and adopted, or replicated in other sites. This is the ultimate criteria for success. SEAs are not advised to undertake a demonstration program strategy unless they are equally committed to supporting dissemination and replication activities. Experience seems to indicate that sites wishing to adopt and integrate a demonstration program into its own operations will require financial support, or "seed money" to get started, and the training and technical assistance role played by the demonstration program developer is crucial.

Appendix I

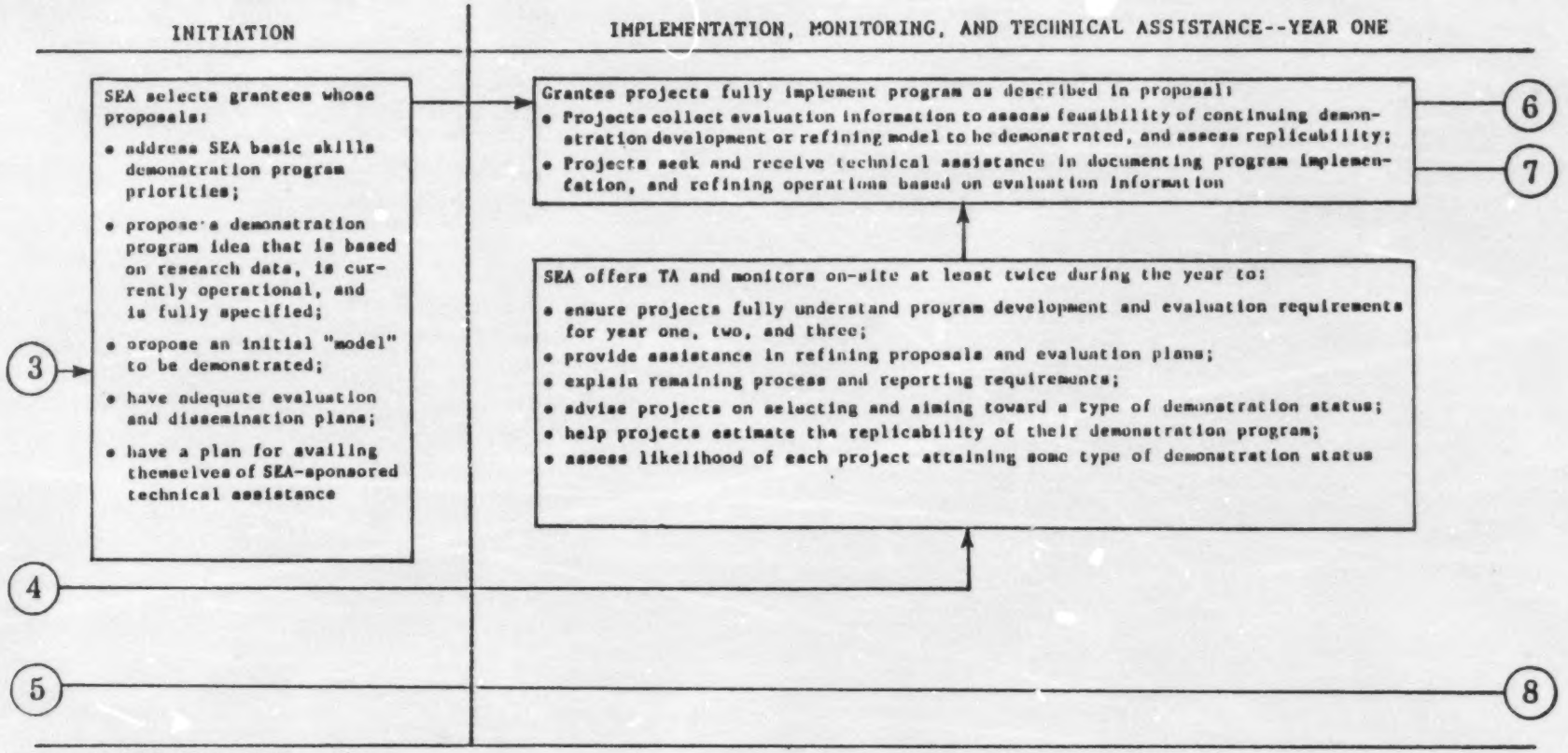
PROTOTYPE MODEL OF SEA-SPONSORED DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM ON BASIC SKILLS IMPROVEMENT


POLICY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY ADOPTION
PLANNING
INITIATION
SEA Advisory Committee decides to adopt a basic skills demonstration program under Sections 564 and 572 of ECIA
SEA adopts and publicizes a basic skills instructional improvement policy
SEA determines, on the basis of needs assessment information, priority instructional area in which demonstration programs are needed and should be developed
SEA defines "demonstration" and criteria for attainment
SEA determines funding duration and level of effort for each demonstration program
SEA defines complementary state dissemination and replication strategy
SEA prepares demonstration grants application package calling for pre-application proposals
1
2
EVALUATION CONCERNS

(continued)


INITIATION
SEA requires proposals that achieve demonstration status over two years, and provide for dissemination and replication during the third year
SEA requires proposals that include evaluation plans assessing program effectiveness and exportability
SEA requires proposals for programs with staff competent in service activity and model program development
SEA requires proposals establishing a research base convincing the innovation is worth testing for demonstration and dissemination
SEA publicizes its dissemination and replication strategy
SEA defines its monitoring and technical assistance requirements
1
2
SEA provides clarification to prospective applicants
SEA selects and orients field reviewers
SEA receives and reviews preapplication proposals
SEA invites full proposals
SEA and field reviewers select grantees
3
4
5
EVALUATION CONCERNS

(continued)


INITIATION
IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE--YEAR ONE
SEA selects grantees whose proposals:
• address SEA basic skills demonstration program priorities;
• propose a demonstration program idea that is based on research data, is currently operational, and is fully specified;
• propose an initial "model" to be demonstrated;
• have adequate evaluation and dissemination plans;
• have a plan for availing themselves of SEA-sponsored technical assistance
Grantee projects fully implement program as described in proposal:
• Projects collect evaluation information to assess feasibility of continuing demonstration development or refining model to be demonstrated, and assess replicability;
• Projects seek and receive technical assistance in documenting program implementation, and refining operations based on evaluation information
SEA offers TA and monitors on-site at least twice during the year to:
• ensure projects fully understand program development and evaluation requirements for year one, two, and three;
• provide assistance in refining proposals and evaluation plans;
• explain remaining process and reporting requirements;
• advise projects on selecting and aiming toward a type of demonstration status;
• help projects estimate the replicability of their demonstration program;
• assess likelihood of each project attaining some type of demonstration status
3
4
5
6
7
8

EVALUATION CONCERNS

- Are there stated criteria for attaining demonstration program objectives? Do all projects understand and agree to these criteria?
- Do the grant solicitation and selection procedures yield funded projects that address goals and are likely to become demonstrations?
- Are project evaluation plans adequate to provide year one, two, and three information to projects and to the SEA?
- Is there an SEA monitoring process in place that will support project demonstration program development?

- Are grantee project demonstration models, operational plans, and evaluation plans refined on the basis of first year evaluation information?
- Do projects meet first year criteria of full implementation and model refinement, indicating a likelihood of achieving demonstration status?
- Does market analysis indicate projects are replicable?
- Are projects seeking and receiving the necessary technical assistance?
- Is SEA monitoring system implemented?

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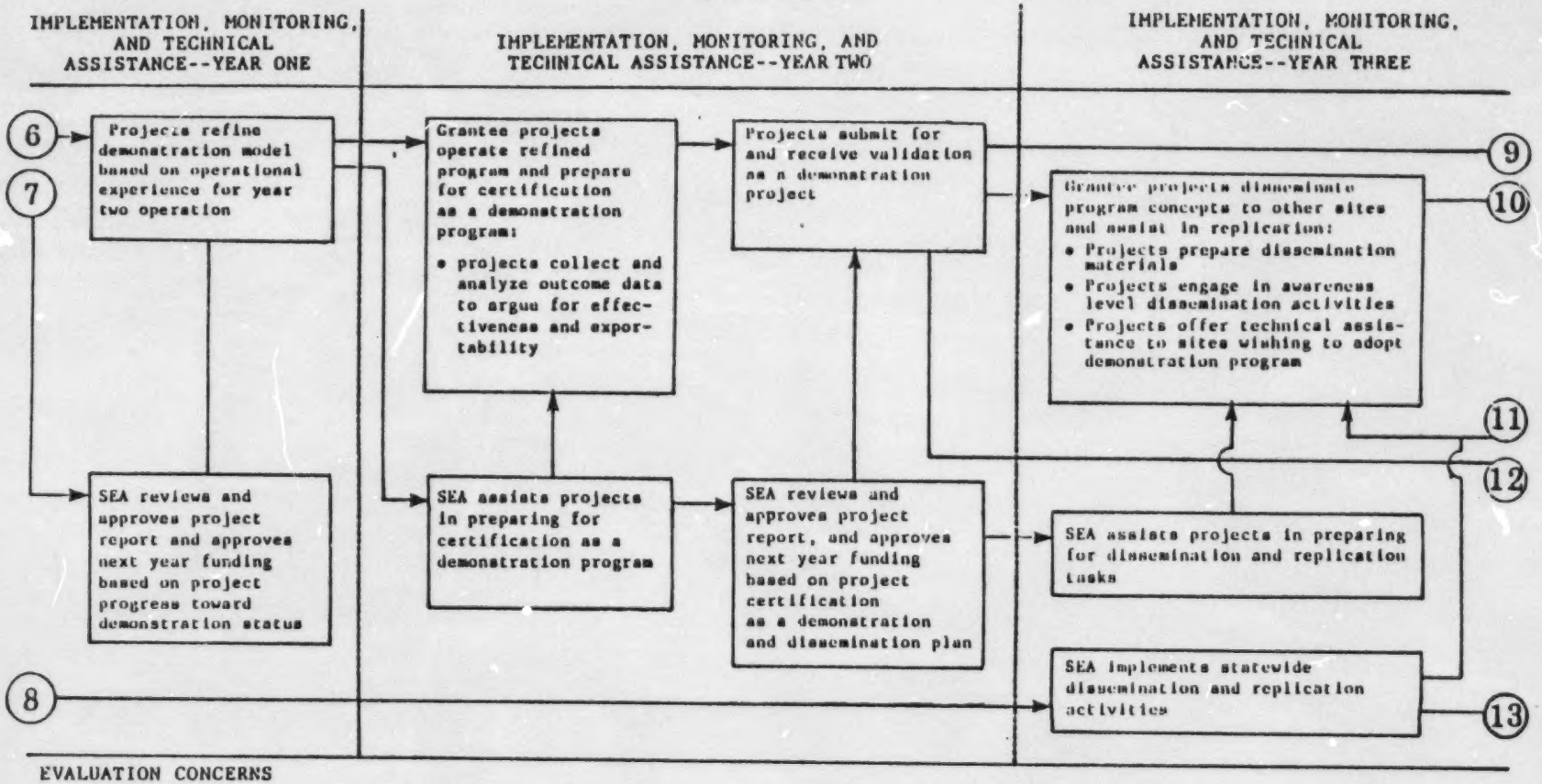
IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE--YEAR ONE
IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE--YEAR TWO
IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE--YEAR THREE
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
Projects refine demonstration model based on operational experience for year two operation
Grantee projects operate refined program and prepare for certification as a demonstration program:
• projects collect and analyze outcome data to argue for effectiveness and exportability
Projects submit for and receive validation as a demonstration project
Grantee projects disseminate program concepts to other sites and assist in replication:
• Projects prepare dissemination materials
• Projects engage in awareness level dissemination activities
• Projects offer technical assistance to sites wishing to adopt demonstration program
SEA reviews and approves project report and approves next year funding based on project progress toward demonstration status
SEA assists projects in preparing for certification as a demonstration program
SEA reviews and approves project report, and approves next year funding based on project certification as a demonstration and dissemination plan
SEA assists projects in preparing for dissemination and replication tasks
SEA implements statewide dissemination and replication activities
EVALUATION CONCERNS
• Are projects certified as demonstrations, using the criteria of effectiveness and exportability?
• Do replicability assessments still support demonstration marketability?
• Do projects seek and receive the necessary technical assistance?

30

31

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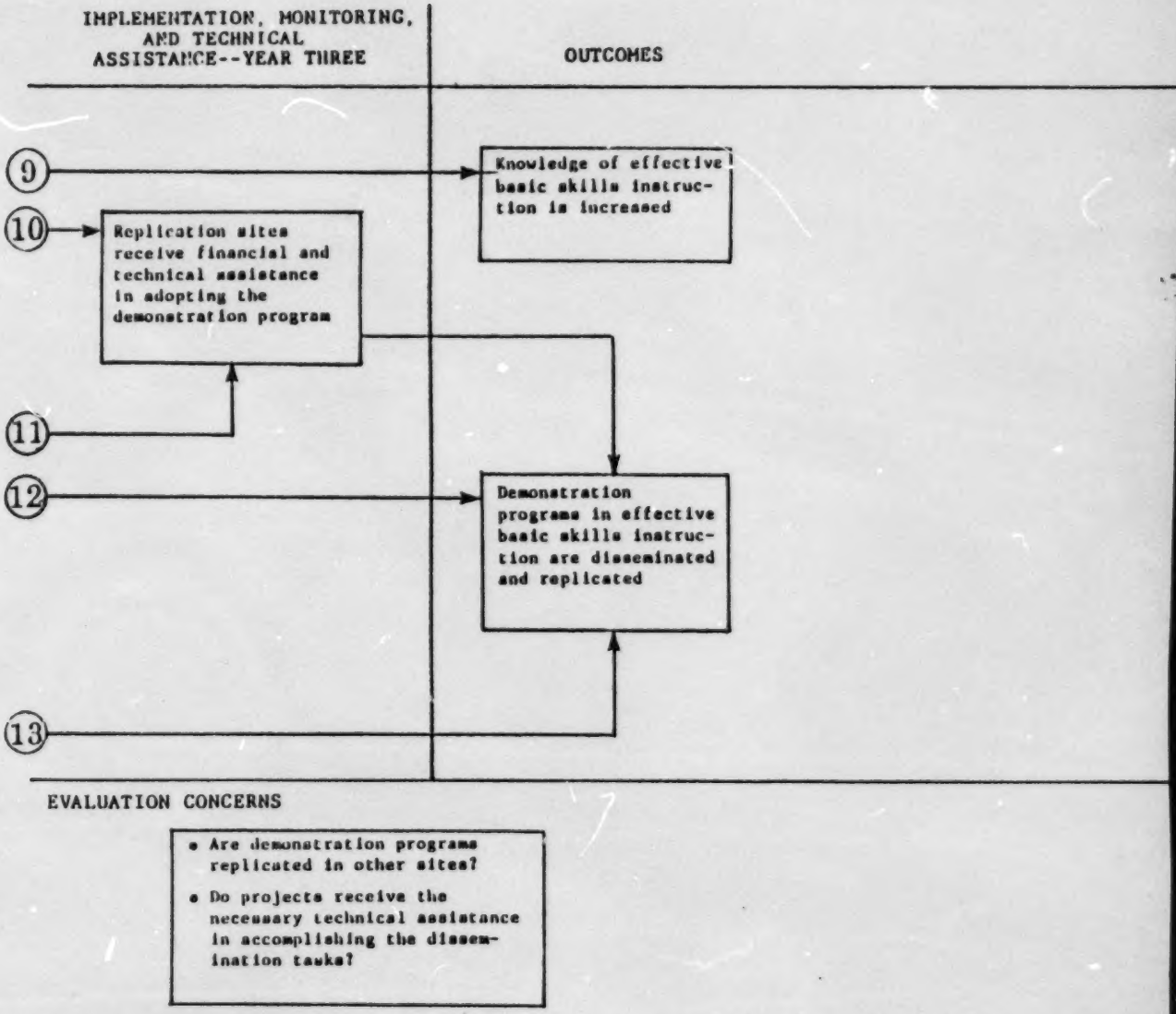
IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE--YEAR THREE
OUTCOMES
9
Knowledge of effective basic skills instruction is increased
10
Replication sites receive financial and technical assistance in adopting the demonstration program
11
12
Demonstration programs in effective basic skills instruction are disseminated and replicated
13
EVALUATION CONCERNS
• Are demonstration programs replicated in other sites?
• Do projects receive the necessary technical assistance in accomplishing the dissemination tasks?